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Budget Bill Includes Medical Research Funds for OK

Washington, D.C. -- Oklahoma and several other states will receive a boost in medical research funding, says Congressman Ernest Istook (R-OK). It's part of the budget bill signed into law by the President yesterday.

Istook's work secured a 300% increase (\$40 million) for Oklahoma and other states which have been short-changed in federal medical research grants. Istook says this is one part of his effort for a dramatic increase of medical research in Oklahoma.

As a member of the Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee, Istook has been working to end the bias which awards 93% of federal medical research to only 24 states. Grants to those 24 states from the National Institute of Health (NIH) average \$265 per citizen. Oklahoma receives only \$45 per capita in NIH grants.

The EPSCoR program (Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research), which received a 300% increase in the current budget bill, provides research monies dedicated toward work done in under-represented states, including Oklahoma. Istook also introduced legislation earlier this year requiring NIH to allocate \$200-million annually [of its approximately \$15-billion budget] toward Oklahoma and the other 25 states who have been snubbed.

Istook has been working with Dr. J. Donald Capra, president of the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation in Oklahoma City and Dr. Joseph Ferretti, the Provost of the OU Health Science Center to address these funding issues.

“Congressman Istook has recognized and [addressed] a problem that has existed for over two decades, but that few have done anything about,” said Dr. Donald Capra, president of the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation. **“This will have more impact on Oklahoma than almost anything else done in Congress this year.”**

Istook cited recent grants to OMRF and the University of Oklahoma as part of the effort to expand medical research in Oklahoma. **“Many in Oklahoma are pushing hard to stimulate medical research here, and I'm working with them,”** said Istook. **“We have great potential, and with hard work we can fulfill our potential.”**

“This is about more than medical research dollars. It's about quality of life. As Oklahoma improves its health infrastructure, we will attract more grants, more higher paying jobs, and access to better public health facilities for everyone.”

Istook also says U.S. taxpayers will benefit **“because of Oklahoma's low cost-of-living. Each research dollar stretches farther here, rather than supporting ultra-high overhead that's common elsewhere.”**